

Message Text

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FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM MEXICO DATED MARCH 16, 1978
SENT SECSTATE WASHDC INFO GUADALAJARA, HERMOSILLO,
MAZATLAN, MONTERREY, ALL OTHER USCONS MEXICO IS REPEATED
TO YOU: QUOTE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE MEXICO 04410

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

EO: 11652: N/A
TAGS: SNAR, MX
SUBJECT: NARCOTICS - PRESS GUIDANCE ON WITHDRAWAL OF
DEA FROM GOM ERADICATION PROGRAM

1. IN THE EVENT THERE ARE QUESTIONS FROM THE CONGRESS,
THE PRESS OR THE PUBLIC ABOUT DEA'S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE
ERADICATION CAMPAIGN, I RECOMMEND THAT SPOKESMEN OF ALL
AGENCIES REPLY ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES.

2. QUESTION: WHY IS DEA NO LONGER PARTICIPATING IN
THE MEXICAN ERADICATION CAMPAIGN? ANSWER: FOR THE
PAST SEVERAL YEARS, DEA HAS PROVIDED ASSISTANCE TO THE
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PAGE 02 STATE 070792

CAMPAIGN IN THE FORM OF TDY PERSONNEL. DURING THE
CURRENT DISCUSSIONS WITH THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT, THE
MEXICAN GOVERNMENT HAS EXPRESSED THE BELIEF THAT IT HAS
SUFFICIENT TRAINED PERSONNEL TO DO THE JOB AND HAS ASKED
THAT WE WITHDRAW THE TDY PERSONNEL. WE CONCURRED IN
THE MEXICAN ASSESSMENT AND THEREFORE TERMINATED THE
DEA/TDY PRESENCE.

3. QUESTION: HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE AFFECTED? ANSWER:
THIS DECISION AFFECTS ONLY ABOUT 20 DEA AGENTS AND
SUPPORT PERSONNEL SENT TO MEXICO ON TDY FOR PERIODS OF
APPROXIMATELY 90 DAYS TWICE EACH YEAR.

4. QUESTION: HOW MANY DEA PEOPLE ARE ASSIGNED TO
MEXICO? ANSWER (FOR BACKGROUND USE ONLY): DEA IS
CURRENTLY AUTHORIZED 33 AGENT POSITIONS AND 25 SUPPORT
POSITIONS IN MEXICO, FOR A TOTAL OF 58 POSITIONS.
THEY ARE ASSIGNED TO THE EMBASSY AND TO FIVE OF THE NINE
CONSULAR POSTS.

5. QUESTION: WHAT WERE THESE TDY PEOPLE DOING IN
MEXICO? ANSWER: THEY SERVED AS SPOTTERS FLYING IN
MEXICAN GOVERNMENT AIRCRAFT TO HELP LOCATE ILLICIT
POPPY FIELDS, WHICH THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT WOULD THEN
KILL WITH HERBICIDES.

6. QUESTION: WITHOUT THESE DEA PEOPLE IN THE FIELD,
HOW WILL WE KNOW WHETHER THE ASSISTANCE WE ARE GIVING THE
MEXICANS FOR THE ERADICATION PROGRAM IS BEING PROPERLY
UTILIZED? ANSWER: WE HAVE DETERMINED THAT THE EMBASSY
HAS SUFFICIENT PERSONNEL IN THE FIELD TO KEEP US
INFORMED OF THE PROGRESS OF THE MEXICAN ERADICATION
PROGRAM. (COMMENT, FOR BACKGROUND USE: MEXICAN
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PAGE 03 STATE 070792

GOVERNMENT HAS ALWAYS PERMITTED JOURNALISTS AND
MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO VISIT ERADICATION OPERATIONS AND
CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE THIS POLICY.)

7. QUESTION : IN VIEW OF REPORTS THAT ERADICATION
ACTIVITIES HAVE DECLINED SIGNIFICANTLY, ARE THE
MEXICANS ASKING THE DEA PEOPLE TO LEAVE IN ORDER TO
HIDE A POOR PERFORMANCE? ANSWER: NO. WHILE IT IS
TRUE THAT THE MEXICANS HAVE DESTROYED FEWER POPPY
FIELDS IN 1978 THAN IN COMPARABLE PERIODS OF 1977,
THERE ARE STRONG INDICATIONS THERE ARE FEWER POPPY
FIELDS THIS YEAR. EMBASSY OFFICERS WHO ARE FAMILIAR
WITH THE MATTER AND WHO HAVE BEEN TO THE OPERATIONAL
AREAS IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS ATTRIBUTE THIS DECLINE
TO THE EFFECTS OF THE ERADICATION CAMPAIGN IN LATE
1977, TO THE INCREASED MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE
POPPY-GROWING AREAS, AND TO UNUSUAL WEATHER CONDITIONS
IN THE FORM OF ABNORMALLY COLD TEMPERATURES IN THE
MOUNTAINS AND A PROTRACTED DROUGHT. LUCY UNQUOTE VANCE

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